

# 100,000 POUNDS OF TNT GO UP IN SMOKE AT KOW

## High Explosives, Unfit For Army Use, De- stroyed By Burning

Dense, black clouds, fed by leaping flames which varied in hue from a red-orange to sun-bright yellow, billowed more than 500 feet skyward yesterday afternoon as 100,000 pounds of contaminated and unusable TNT was set on fire at the Kankakee Ordnance Works burning pit inside the Joliet Arsenal grounds.

Spread in lots of less than 500 pounds over a five acre area, the TNT burned in approximately 45 minutes, as the flames were whipped on by a 30-mile-per-hour wind.

The burning of this unusable material is part of a program at the Joliet arsenal which will save taxpayers an estimated \$100,000 on costs of storage, regular inspection and extra safety precautions. Another 250,000 pounds will be destroyed by the end of this week.

**THE HIGH EXPLOSIVES** had been offered for sale, but no buyers appeared. Efforts have also been made to salvage part of the TNT for peacetime uses. However, these have proven futile also.

Under the skillful handling of Jim McMurray, pit operator, the burning, which was watched by representatives of the press and officers at the plant, went off without mishap.

Reason for spreading the explosives in 500 pound lots was to prevent any dangerous burst. Mr. McMurray explained that if the TNT should be accidentally detonated, only 500 pounds would explode, and the blaze could be brought under control by a fire fighting squad. However, if the entire 100,000 pounds were placed in one pile and an explosion occurred, results might be disastrous.

**A FUSE** of smokeless powder connecting each stack of TNT was ignited first. The TNT piles had a straw bed to provide a better draft. Mr. McMurray pointed out that with the TNT spread over the ground there was very little danger of an explosion. After the TNT had stopped burning and the ground was inspected it was found to have a glassy crust, caused by fusion of the dirt and the particles of waste from the powder.

Mr. McMurray seemed undisturbed about the fact that so much TNT was on hand. However, he commented that during his six years of service with the marines, including duty in the ETO and Pacific theater of operations, more respect was shown the TNT and it was handled with as much, if not more, care than in the raw form yesterday. That was because the powder was contained in bombs and shells all set to go off once they were dropped or fired.

There were some 200 of the 500 pound "beds" of TNT and after five minutes all were ignited. At first at small flame flickered on the ground as the initial pit was lighted, and only a small amount of white-grey smoke could be discerned. Within a few seconds the next bed about 30 feet away was ignited and so on down the line.

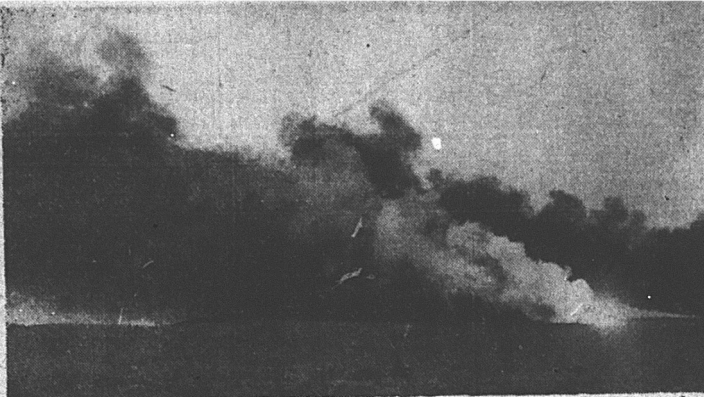
**WITHIN 15 MINUTES**, although spectators were standing more than 75 yards from the pit, the heat thrown from the burning TNT became extremely intense, jumping in degrees as each pile of powder and explosives burst into flame.

Standing by was a fire truck—just in case!

Had there been no wind, the smoke would have gone straight up and would have hovered over the burning pit for hours, officials said. However, because of the wind the smoke was soon diffused. Because the fumes can be poisonous, viewers were advised to stand to the windward so that smoke would not be blown in their direction.

**WHILE THERE** has been burning of small amounts of powder daily for the past month, yesterday's conflagration was the first affecting surplus and contaminated material. It was the first time also that pictures were permitted to be taken by a newspaper photographer in the area.

Col. R. R. Klanderman, field director of ammunition plants and commanding officer of the Joliet arsenal, Capt. Corv Travers and Lt. Robert McCann were among those who witnessed the burning.



Less than a minute after the first 500 pound bed of TNT went up in flames yesterday afternoon, this was the scene which resulted at the burning pit of the KOW reservation, Joliet Arsenal. In another few minutes the remaining 190 piles of contaminated and unusable TNT were crackling with brisk fury, spurred on by a 30 mile wind. At left, the light patch is a bed almost spent, while the bright flash at right shows a TNT pile at the point of ignition from the smokeless powder fuse. The patches spread over about five acres of the burning pit. Another 250,000 pounds will be destroyed before the end of this week so that storage and safety inspection costs amounting to \$100,000 can be eliminated. According to Col. R. R. Klanderman, commanding officer of the arsenal and field director of ammunition plants, the high explosives destroyed yesterday, would, if dropped in shells and bombs, have caused devastating results in a city the size of Joliet. (Herald-News photo.)